

## **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)**

Founded in 1960, The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO mission is to: “promote international cooperation and to coordinate programmes in research, services and capacity building, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement management, sustainable development and protection of the marine environment and the decision making process of its Member States.” The IOC’s high level objectives in this current Medium Term Strategy are:

- Healthy ocean ecosystems and sustained ecosystem services
- Effective early warning systems and preparedness for tsunamis and other ocean related hazards
- Increased resilience to climate change and variability and enhanced safety, efficiency and effectiveness of all ocean-based activities through science-founded services, adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Enhanced knowledge of emerging ocean science issues

The U.S. and NOAA have been deeply involved in IOC since its inception through such IOC programmes as:

- UNESCO-IOC oversees a Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) to observe, model and analyze marine and ocean variables, supported by U.S. including NOAA for global GOOS instrumentation, financial support, data management and scientific leadership. GOOS implementation is supported by JCOMM, the Joint Technical Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology. JCOMM is an intergovernmental body of technical experts that provides a mechanism for international coordination of oceanographic and marine meteorological observing, data management and services, combining the expertise, technologies and capacity building capabilities of the meteorological and oceanographic communities. The data the system yields are used to provide accurate descriptions of the present state of the oceans, including living resources; continuous forecasts of the future conditions of the sea for as far ahead as possible, and the basis for climate forecasts and marine meteorology and in the future, ecosystem based management. In 2014, IOC completed its coastal GOOS program and much of the coordination is accomplished through the GOOS Regional Alliance.
- U.S. support to the ocean carbon program (through staff support and scientific leadership) through the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) plays a key role in advancing international knowledge on ocean acidification and promotes development of a global network of ocean carbon observations for research. It has brought new international visibility to ocean acidification through its quadriennial Ocean in a High CO<sub>2</sub> World expert meetings. IOC also provides limited financial support to the World Climate Research Program and seeks to expand its work in climate change adaptation, with special focus in Africa.
- Following devastating tsunamis generated from earthquakes in Chile (1960) and Alaska (1964), the newly created IOC established an International Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific, with the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre (PTWC) and the International Tsunami Information Centre (ITIC) in Honolulu, Hawaii Islands (USA). Since 2005, the IOC and its member states created a global tsunami warning system (Pacific, Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean/Atlantic). NOAA currently provides warning services for the Pacific and Caribbean regions. NOAA, USAID, State and USGS provide a suite of capabilities to the global system including U.S. warning services, research, modeling and capacity building/preparedness training. NOAA also hosts an International Tsunami Information Center in partnership with the IOC, based at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre.
- IOC’s twenty year program on Harmful Algal Blooms has been instrumental as a catalyst to national programs (including US ECOHAB), publication of IOC standards manuals, extensive international training programs, and establishment of science and communication centers in Denmark and Spain. Over the past 20 years, IOC has by itself or with partners organized training courses in species identification, toxicity testing, and monitoring and management strategies. The IOC is currently developing a Ciguatera Strategy in cooperation with the WHO and FAO and by coordinating research needed by Member States through the Global HAB Programme.
- IOC’s participation in the International Large Marine Ecosystem partnership for twenty years has been instrumental in forging scientific and management collaboration through the Global Environment Facility, with key U.S. scientific engagement.

- In 2011, it commemorated its 50th year to facilitate the exchange of oceanographic data and information between participating Member States, and by meeting the needs of users for data and information products. Program emphasis has been on building a global network for Oceanographic Data Centres (especially in Africa), and integration with IOC programs such as GOOS/JCOMM, tsunamis, HAB, long-term accessibility and archival of oceanographic data, meta-data and information, regional seabed data atlases, etc. IOC is expanding its data management focused Ocean Teacher Program into a Global Academy (with regional centers) for expanded regional and distance learning opportunities on all topics of IOC interest.

In 2015, the IOC hopes to publish the results of the first cycle of the Regular Process (2010–2014) under the United Nations, which will result in the first integrated global marine assessment of the world's oceans and seas, including socio-economic aspects, also known as the World Ocean Assessment (WOA).

A growing area for substantial new IOC and U.S. engagement will be the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment (GRAME) now under review at the United Nations General Assembly and climate change adaptation.

*NOTE: Palestinian membership as a state in UNESCO (voted on Oct 31, 2011) triggered longstanding legislative restrictions which will compel the United States to refrain from making further contributions to UNESCO. The United States will maintain its membership in and commitment to UNESCO and we will consult with Congress to ensure that U.S. interests and influence are preserved."*

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